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ABSTRACT

Existing research reveals little about the availability of internships for graduate students in higher education, and also fails to explain the utilization of these internship offerings. The findings from this study suggest that while a majority of programs in higher education have some type of practice-based offerings in their curricula, considerable variation exists in how the internships are structured and the types of internships utilized by students. Questionnaires were mailed to program directors listed in the Association for the Study of Higher Education Membership and Higher Education Program Faculty Directory. Mailings and follow-up produced 64 usable responses. Over 92 percent of respondents reported their programs offered internships and 56 percent reported participation of master's level students. Forty percent of the Ed.D programs required internships and 18 percent of the Ph.D. programs required internships. This study found that the more theoretical the degree, the less likely students were to engage in internships. If higher education programs are to transcend the notion that their degrees lack rigor, then program administrators must look closely at the content and curricula of their programs, both theoretically and practically. It is imperative that present and potential higher education practitioners be given meaningful experiences that connect the world of the classroom with practical experience. (Contains 28 references.) (JLS)

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The Practice of Academic Administration: Internships in Higher Education Programs

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The Practice of Academic Administration:
Internships in Higher Education Programs

Abstract

Existing research reveals little about the availability of internships for graduate students in higher education, and further falls short to explain the utilization of these internship offerings. The findings from this study suggest that while a majority of programs in higher education have some type of practice-based offerings in their curricula, considerable variation exists in how the internships are structured and the types of internships utilized by students.

Increasingly, higher education institutions in the United States are criticized for not adequately preparing students for life and employment in the "real world." From a utilitarian perspective, higher education is not faring well in the public's eye in the preparation of a skilled and educated public. Higher education tends to get "blamed" for problems arising in the work force (Schon 1987). The political climate for education is such that faculty and administrators are being asked to do more with less and to respond to the demands of the public to meet their call for a skilled citizenry. Academic administration is a balancing act that strives to meet accountability of the public while maintaining traditional academic values and freedoms (Fife and Goodchild 1991). If academic leaders are to satisfy the needs of an ever-critical public, they must be adequately prepared to do so both academically and professionally.

Although there is no set path to academic administration, higher education programs do contribute a significant number of graduates to college and university

administration (Townsend and Wiese 1991). Thus, in a time when higher education is subject to public debate and scrutiny it is important to look at the academic preparation of students in higher education programs--the future leaders of postsecondary education--to examine the content and quality of their education. In addition to curricula to introduce students to the theory and practice of higher education (e.g., courses in curriculum, history, administration of higher education), some programs require and/or offer students the opportunity to participate in structured experience-based internships that allow students to simultaneously work in an office on campus, either at the degree granting institution or another campus, as part of their curriculum. Typically, these type of offerings allow students to gain practical experience while having a class, seminar, or independent study to reflect upon the experience and connect it to concepts and theories presented in textbooks on higher education. The merit of these kinds of experiences for students in programs other than higher education are well documented to contribute to reflective practice (Cash 1992; Branch 1991; Farrell 1992; Gottfried et al 1993; Harcharik 1993; Schon 1987; Washington 1992; Werner 1989). In higher education, however, little is known about the availability and utilization of internships.

The purpose of this paper is to look at the content of higher education programs to see how they approach the preparation of practitioners in education. Specifically, we survey a sample of department chairs to determine the kinds of experiential, "hands-on" opportunities they offer students in higher education programs to learn firsthand about the practice of higher education. For those administrators who have moved through the ranks to positions of academic leadership a majority of their "training" has been on the

job. The questions we ask are: Do higher education programs offer students similar kinds of "on-the-job training" as part of program curricula? And, if so, how many students engage in these types of experiences?

Following we discuss the relevant literature on experiential education and internships in general, and internships in graduate professional programs other than higher education (e.g., K-12 educational administration; health administration) since there is limited literature on internships in higher education programs. The paper includes a description of the methodology we employed to survey department chairs of higher education programs, the findings of the study, and a discussion of the findings and their implications for higher education programs and practice.

Experiential Education and Internships

Learning by doing has always been an important part of the higher education tradition. Educational and learning theorists constantly speak of the importance of engaging students in hands-on learning as a means to enhance their comprehension and engagement of subject matter (Dewey 1938; Hutchings and Wutzdorff 1988; Kolb 1985). There is no one set way students engage in experiential learning--some students do internships, student teaching, or practica, while others do field-based experiments and service learning to enhance their in-class learning. These kinds of experiences are well documented to have positive effects on student development and comprehension (Hutchings and Wutzdorff 1988; Kolb 1985; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991).

Internships, and other types of experiential education, engage students in real world settings that provide a connection between theory and practice. Internships stand

"in an intermediate space between the practice world, the 'lay' world of ordinary life, and the esoteric world of the academy" (Schon 1987, 37). Out-of-class learning that is theoretically rooted in the classroom engages students in the action-reflection process that characterizes comprehensive learning (Eyler 1994).

Educational field experiences designed to assist students in the application of concepts and skills in a "real world" setting are categorized variously as clinical activities, performance-based activities, practica, preceptorships, clerkships, scientific work experience, and internships (Chance 1990; Gottfried et al 1993; Stark et al 1986; Vier 1990). Werner (1989) argues that field experiences should be grouped into three classifications of course based activities, practicum, and the internship and that each activity should serve a specific purpose in providing opportunities for students to enhance, refine, and practice work related skills.

Clinical, course based, or performance-based field activities facilitate a student's broader understanding of the connection between the academic setting and the world of activities associated with a specific profession (NASSP 1985; Werner 1989; Chance 1990). Awareness building experiences and projects which allow the student to critically analyze a professional work activity, report the outcomes of specific professional engagement, and provide a forum for student discussion of professional issues and concerns form the basis of course based activities which are generally completed within the context of a specified academic course at a particular time, usually the period of an academic semester. This type of experience may involve students in shadowing an

administrator to get a sense of their work as part of the requirements for a particular course.

Practicum experiences are characterized by course work or selected activities that emphasize the application of conceptual and practical skills in a selected field site (Cash 1992; Daresh 1987; Werner 1989). Students engaged in practicum activities have generally completed advanced course work which equips them with the requisite concepts and theories that have the potential to be applied within the professional work setting (Keenan 1992). Most work associated with a practicum is generally completed by students or active professionals engaged in advanced study at times outside of their usual routines. Practicum experiences emphasize close working relationships between students and the cooperative professional workers or administrators who provide work supervision, the demonstration of specific skills, and the completion of a project which makes a significant contribution to the professional organization in which the student is situated (Cash 1992; Chance 1990; Cottrill 1994; Gottfried et al 1993; Washington 1992; Werner 1989).

The internship is characterized by full-time service in a professional job that is different from the student's regular employment and in which the student is supervised by a capable and competent professional (Farrell 1992; Gottfried et al 1993; Keenan 1992; Werner 1989). Through the internship an attempt is made to actively involve the student in a variety of responsibilities that are inherent within the particular professional practice. Cottrill (1994) and Werner (1989) state that the length of the internship experience should be a period of a year, but not less than a semester.

The success of the internship experience is directly related to the components, processes, and structures which support it. Chance (1990), Eyler (1994), and Stark et al (1986) propose that the internship experience is successful only if it provides an opportunity for students to integrate reflection with action and problem solving routines within the context of the placement. Branch (1991) believes that the proper mix between the goals of the individual and the needs of the host organization will result in a successful internship experience which is mutually beneficial to both the individual and the institution. Werner (1989) and Vier (1990) contend that successful academic internships are fostered through the joint cooperation of competent and experienced professors and practitioners who provide direction, guidance, and meaningful on-the-job experiences for students.

The benefits derived by students who are engaged in professional internship experiences have been delineated by studies and activities focusing upon this educational experience. Cash (1992) found that student interns from a variety of academic specialties who worked in a college's institutional research office accrued varied benefits from their experiences. Psychology interns were encouraged by their departmental faculty to submit their research work for presentation at a regional meeting of the American Psychological Association. The submitted work was accepted for presentation. Mathematics interns gained important skills in the use of statistical packages which supported their advanced course work and aspirations for graduate study. Students from disciplines such as Sociology, Economics, and Business Administration perceived themselves as being more job marketable because of the skills they attained in the areas

of research and evaluation during their internship. One student intern obtained a position in a Chicago bank shortly after completing the internship experience and credited that experience as being key to obtaining the new job position.

Keenan (1992) found that over one-quarter of all students who were involved in advertising internships offered by eighty-four schools of Journalism received a job offer from the host organization. In follow-up studies of practicing school administrators who had completed a required internship as part of a master's degree in school administration at the University of Texas, Austin, Veir (1990) noted that study respondents were more often than not offered employment as school administrators in school districts where their internship experienced was completed. Opportunities to observe intern's knowledge base, philosophy of education, and personal and administrative qualities and attributes were cited by respondents as being key considerations of their job offers by school districts.

Washington (1992) found that graduate Health Care administration students increased their desire to pursue health care administration careers and to complete the requisite program of studies when they were involved in internship experiences that included opportunities for them to help hospital supervisors in administrative tasks requiring physical activities.

Practicing teachers participating in the multifaceted St. Louis (MO) Research Internship Programs, involving collaboration and on-the-job interactions with professionals from industry and academia in the fields of science, mathematics, and technology, noted significant professional and career benefits to their involvement in

internship experiences (Gottfried et al 1993). Benefits cited by the teacher interns included: (a) increased content knowledge in science and technology, (b) increased knowledge of applications of science in the work place, (c) increased awareness of the relationship of math and science to technology and society, (d) increased experience in scientific research design and experimentation, and (e) enhanced ability to design and implement hands-on inquiry lessons in their classrooms. Additionally, graduate teacher interns reaffirmed their goals for being teachers and began to perceive of themselves as agents of change and innovation in their schools districts (Farrell 1992; Gottfried et al 1993).

The questions we seek to answer are: Do these same types of internship opportunities exist in higher education program curricula? Do students utilize these experiences? In higher education programs, internships and other types of experienced-based learning are often referred to and included in curricular outlines but there is a lack of information about the content and utilization of the kinds of out-of-class learning in which higher education students are engaged. An implicit assumption exists that since the majority of students in higher education are already practitioners (or have experience as a practitioner) there is no need to offer internships as part of their professional preparation and academic study. We explore this assumption more fully in the study described in the following section.

Methods

In the spring of 1995 a cover letter explaining the purposes of the study and a survey designed to learn about the availability of internships in higher education

programs was mailed to program directors identified in the *1995 Association for the Study of Higher Education Membership and Higher Education Program Faculty Directory*. A total of 113 questionnaires were mailed. Two mailings, one initial and one follow-up, generated 66 completed questionnaires, a response rate of 58 percent. Two of the returned questionnaires were not usable for the purposes of the study due to the fact that one institution had discontinued its higher education program and a moratorium was in effect for another program.

The study was designed to discern the opportunity for internship experiences provided for students within the higher education programs of the institutions sampled and to determine the programmatic and contextual nature of these internship programs. The survey included items about the course and program offerings in the department, the organizational structure of the department, the internship offerings for different degrees at both the master and doctoral level, and the student utilization of internships. Following is a discussion of the results generated from the survey responses.

Results

A majority of the departments surveyed offered programs leading to the M.Ed., Ph.D., and Ed.D. degrees. The most prominent emphases were Administration/ Governance and Student Affairs. The data show that a majority of the programs (92 percent) provided some type of internship offering in the higher education curriculum. For those institutions not offering internships, two major reasons were offered: (1) students were already practicing in higher education, thus gaining practical on the job

experience, and (2) time and financial considerations precluded participation in internships.

Of the 92 percent of the programs that offered internships, the types of internships offered, the number of students who participated, and the number of credits earned varied greatly by degree type. As indicated in Table 1, internships were offered to both master's and doctoral students. Master's degree students were most likely to take advantage of the opportunity to participate in internship experiences. At the master's degree level, 56 percent of students have internship experiences that are required and independent of the student's current employment. The Ed.D. and Ph.D. degrees were offered as the terminal degree by 43 (67 percent) of the reporting programs. Forty percent of the Ed.D. programs required internships and students could participate in an internship arranged at their discretion. A majority of Ed.D. degree internship experiences were not connected with the student's current employment. Ed.D. internships tended to be practitioner oriented and involved students in placements in support or administrative services (e.g., career services, financial aid, provost office). Only 18 percent of Ph.D. programs required internships as part of their curriculum while 79 percent gave students the option to participate in internships at their discretion. For those Ph.D. students who participated in internships, 59 percent were in offices not connected with their current employment. Ph.D. internship experiences tended to be oriented toward research in institutional research offices or working on specific research projects, as opposed to administrative ones, in campus offices.

Table 1

Internships by Student Degree Program

	M.Ed.	Ed.D.	Ph.D.
Required	56%	40%	18%
Optional	40%	56%	79%
Can be Arranged	4%	2%	3%
Not Offered	-	2%	-

Thirty-one of the higher education programs surveyed offered variable credit for internship work. In those instances where a set number of credits was determined for the internship, degree level determined the applicable credits--typically, 3 credits at the master's degree level and 6 credits at the doctoral level. Although it varied, the most common length of time spent in an internship experience was a semester.

Both barriers and supports existed for the programmatic integration of internships in higher education programs. Barriers included:

(1) Students were already involved in full-time or part-time higher education employment and found it difficult to arrange such experiences or felt that such experiences would not be beneficial, given their present employment;

(2) unpaid internships tended to be less attractive to students and higher education faculty found it difficult to construct paid internships for students on a consistent basis;

(3) coordination and placement of interns was difficult if opportunities could not be arranged on the home campus or at nearby campuses;

(4) faculty involved in the supervision of higher education interns did not receive commensurate credit for their work with students as did their colleagues who were involved in more traditional research and teaching assignments;

(5) internships amounted to extra duty for some faculty who found it difficult to allocate the time required to network with intra-campus agencies or units and other campuses to arrange internship agreements and arrangements; and

(6) some faculty admitted to the lack of knowledge in the structure and composition of an internship program which would make the experience positive and constructive to both the student and to the agency or institution where the student could be potentially placed.

The supports present to facilitate effective internships included:

(1) A campus-wide office for internships that simplified access to off-campus placements;

(2) a practicum/internship coordinator who taught workshops designed to help students reflect upon their learning;

(3) required internships for all graduate students allowed programs to offer effective and meaningful experiences because they were integrated into the curriculum; and

(4) a departmental history of programmatic design which included the internship experience.

In those programs where internships were viewed as an integral part of the program the benefits chronicled included:

(1) Internships allowed students to make the connection between theory and practice and to explore new areas of higher education administration and operation;

(2) students were able to conduct research in higher education with the mentorship of an on-site supervisor and were able to contribute their research to the purposes of the institution where they were situated; and

(3) most higher education programs found that the internship experience provided students with the opportunity to become employed at the host institution where the internship was conducted.

Summary

Although a majority of the higher education programs and students who participated in internships benefitted from the experience, many programs do not offer systematic, practical experiences to complement their curriculum. Master's degree students were most likely to have participated in established internships as part of their programs. At the doctoral level, Ed.D. and Ph.D. students also participated in internships but to a lesser degree. Internship placements for Ed.D. students tended to address practitioner issues, and placements for Ph.D. students were more research oriented. Both

Ed.D. and Ph.D. students who opted for internships tended to do so in offices independent of their current employment (if they were employed).

For those programs offering internships, having programmatic integration facilitated the success of students participating in internships. If programs did not have mechanisms in place to initiate and organize placements it was difficult to offer internships because finding placements takes time and can go unrewarded in institutional reward structures for faculty. Students who participated in internships benefitted from the experience by being able to connect theory and practice, do research and administrative projects with a mentor, and to bridge their education with future employment prospects in higher education. Following we discuss these findings and the implications they have for higher education practice.

Discussion and Implications

In a climate of decreased public support and faith in the outcomes of higher education, and a demand for new accountability in higher education services, the training provided for potential educational leaders cannot be divorced from the "real world" of practice wherein the dynamics for change and the skills to affect change are intertwined. New demands and new visions for higher education require collaborative and cooperative thinking and skills of those whose focus is upon effective change and practice. Such an environment is not created in isolation but in real life situations where theory and practice coalesce into effective solutions and operations. Internships provide the skills--practice, reflection, and mentorship--effective practitioners need to develop into competent administrators.

As the findings from the study indicate, the more theoretical the degree the least likely students are to engage in internships. While internships are prevalent among master's degree students, a move up the academic credential hierarchy to the Ph.D. shows that fewer students are required to avail themselves of internships. Master's students are the most likely of graduate students in higher education to do internships followed by Ed.D. students and then Ph.D. students. The implicit assumption in this finding is that those students moving in the direction of more research oriented careers do not need additional, practical instructional experiences provided by internships. What implications does this have for the practice of academic administration?

According to survey respondents, upwards of 90 percent of graduates in their programs pursue administrative careers in higher education. Understanding the dynamics of effective and productive higher education administration remains a challenging and daunting task for both current and future academic leaders (Balderston 1995; Boyer, Altbach and Whitelaw 1994; Higgerson and Rehwaldt 1993). An array of organizational and institutional models (Birnbaum 1988; Kerr and Gade 1986)--hierarchical, collegial, polycentric, bureaucratic, political, organized anarchy, and atomistic--have been proposed and discussed as a means of navigating the complexity of higher education operations. Birnbaum (1988) further argues that a complete study and view of the climate of higher education institutions must include organizational, systemic, and symbolic perspectives. These perspectives link role and performance expectations, interactions within the institution, and an understanding of the institution which results in effective higher education administration. Given the continuing and increasing

complexity of higher education administration, internship experiences provide the opportunity for students to link the operations of higher education within a systemic context by connecting theory learned in class with practice gained in the internship. The theoretical vantage point of the classroom alone is incomplete to equip students with the tools they need to manage or do research on educational institutions.

Higher education programs are one passport to higher education administration (Townsend and Wiese 1991). Studies conducted to track the career paths of higher education program graduates and to determine the educational tracks of professionals working in higher education administration "suggest that the higher education doctorate is an acceptable credential to those who hire mid-level and senior level college and university administrators" (Townsend and Wiese 1991, 7). However, there is also a perception that higher education degrees are merely an advancement credential for people already employed in higher education, as opposed to a rigorous discipline-based degree that prepares people for work of the mind. This perception is based, at least in part, on the fact that a majority of students in higher education programs are already employed in academic administration and seek the doctorate as a means of promotion (Townsend and Wiese 1991). The findings from this study support the notion that experience in an office on campus precludes the perceived necessity for internships. The findings also show, however, that students who do elect to participate in internships tend to do so in offices <u>not</u> connected with current employment suggesting students desire to gain greater breadth of experience than simply going to school and working provide.

If higher education programs are to transcend the notion that their degrees are lacking rigor then program administrators must look closely at the content and curricula of their programs both theoretically and practically. Equally important, if higher education programs are to produce future educational leaders who will be able to cope with both the tractable and intractable within higher education practice it is imperative to provide students with direct experience and reflection about the complex phenomena of academic administration.

Curriculum for students in higher education programs is variable with regard to the types of experiences they have both in and out of the classroom. This paper captures this variability and challenges leaders in higher education programs to think critically about the efficacy of curricula that denies current and future practitioners, researchers, and theorists of higher education the opportunity to connect theory and practice in meaningful internship experiences.

As higher education enters an era of "sweeping, painful changes" (Breneman (1995), the preparation of administrators in higher education is of utmost importance as we call upon leaders to defend higher education's honor in the face of public scrutiny and declining fiscal support. Further, as academe prepares for what Clark Kerr (cited in Breneman 1995) calls "Tidal Wave II"--the second post-war enrollment growth--within a climate of constricting financial support for education, it is imperative that present and potential higher education practitioners be given meaningful experiences that connect the world of the classroom with practical experience. It is this combination of learning that

will enable higher education to cope competently and calmly with the challenges facing higher education and its leaders.

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